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CBS JOINS THE ATTACK

A month after The Wall Street Journal unleashed Jonathan Kwitny to attack the CIA via Nugan Hand, CBS News joined the assault. On September 22, Gary Shepard said on the CBS Evening News: "Nugan Hand was not your ordinary bank. There were secret numbered accounts, and hardly any of its top people were bankers. Many were American civilians and former high-ranking military officers with ties to U.S. intelligence. When they found the body of Australian businessman Frank Nugan, the bank's chairman, shot to death a few months before the bank went under, they discovered in his pocket the business card of this man, William Colby, former director of the CIA."

That sounds even more ominous than Kwitny's account. One can almost picture the CIA bumping off Nugan and leaving Bill Colby's calling card. Failing to explain that Nugan committed suicide, Shepard referred to Nugan's death as "mysterious." He threw in "illegal currency transactions, big-time drug operations, and the Central Intelligence Agency."

Shepard did not name any of those high-ranking military officers "with ties to intelligence." He couldn't. Nor did he enumerate any of the "many" civilians. He did not bother to explain the connection between Colby and Nugan Hand. Why spoil a good story with facts?

As we noted above, Frank Nugan's partner, Michael Hand, skipped out of Australia on a false passport and has not been seen since. CBS didn't have time to say that. They disposed of Hand this way: "He disappeared a short while after the bank collapsed and is now believed to be dead." There is no evidence that Michael Hand is dead. This was a dramatic touch to imply that someone was intent upon killing the two top officers of Nugan Hand.

Shepard then said: "Australian newspapers reported the connection between Nugan Hand and the U.S.

Navy's super-secret intelligence unit, known as Task Force 157. Among its top agents, CIA man Edwin Wilson, now under indictment for selling arms and explosives to Libyan dictator Muammar Qaddafi."

The alleged Edwin Wilson connection had not escaped Jonathan Kwitny's attention. He noted that a man named Neil Evans, identified as a former Nugan Hand employee, had said that Michael Hand had met Wilson in Bangkok to discuss arms deals. Kwitny pointed out that other Nugan Hand officials had denied Evans' story. Evidently Kwitny had reservations about Evans' credibility, but Shepard had no such reservations. He said that Evans claimed the CIA had made millions from the drug trade and had used the money to finance secret projects. He showed Evans saying: "The idea was that money would be deposited with the Nugan Hand Bank by the CIA through various channels, and also that the Nugan Hand Bank would be the repository for funds coming in from various CIA enterprises, namely drugs in Thailand, marijuana in particular, and that the bank, the Nugan Hand Bank, would then be responsible for re-routing that money to an account in America, a New York Bank."

Adm. Yates says he never heard of Neil Evans, and even Jonathan Kwitny apparently found his tales a bit too tall, but CBS News treated him as a great find.